

Filed for intro on 05/15/2000

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 748
By Brown

A RESOLUTION honoring the work of the Sallie Crenshaw
Bethlehem Community Center of Chattanooga
on the occasion of its 80th anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should note the hard work and
dedication of community organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Bethlehem Center of Chattanooga is celebrating its 80th anniversary of
meritorious public service; and

WHEREAS, the Sallie Crenshaw Bethlehem Center is a non-profit agency providing
educational, recreational, spiritual and comprehensive social services to low-income families in
the Alton Park community of South Chattanooga; and

WHEREAS, established in its present location since 1960, the Bethlehem Center traces
its roots in the Alton Park community to 1920, when the Wesley Center program was founded
near Polk and East 16th Street and in 1921, when the Bethlehem Center at Phillips Temple
CME Church was founded; and

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WHEREAS, in 1986, the Bethlehem Center was re-named in honor of the Reverend Sallie Crenshaw, an African American woman who served her community as a Methodist Minister; and

WHEREAS, exemplary leadership for this noteworthy organization has come in the form of many outstanding individuals; and

WHEREAS, notable citizens who participated as youth at the Bethlehem Center include: Irvin Overton, Moses Freeman, Sherman Matthews, Maria Noel, Debra Mattox, James Baldwin and many others; and

WHEREAS, since 1996, "the Beth" has been home to a very special group, the Bethlehem Community Center Mass Choir, directed by Mr. Willie Kitchens, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, the choir has participated in three notable musical projects; the choir sang back-up with Shania Twain during her concert at the U.T.C. arena, as well as performing at the Bethlehem Center fundraising banquet where Mr. Reggie White was guest speaker, and performing at a three-day workshop and a concert led by Grammy and Dove award winner Richard Smallwood; and

WHEREAS, these amazing individuals have been strong enough to overcome all obstacles and odds stacked against them to produce the most beautiful sounds known to the human ear; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, "the Beth" as the center is affectionately known, held its first annual Sports Leadership Academy; in 1998, the Bethlehem Community Development Credit Union, the first credit union of its kind in Tennessee was opened; and

WHEREAS, the majority of the members of Bethlehem Community Center Choir are inner city children who are novices to public singing, and who have learned a new way to express themselves and also grow stronger in the Lord; and

WHEREAS, an elementary school for at-risk African American boys, the Bethlehem Academy for Boys is another worthy component of the Beth; and

WHEREAS, the Beth serves clients of all ages, and offers many valuable Life Skills Programs including Alternative Education for at-risk children, Drug and Violence Prevention and Intervention for children and adults, Male Mentoring for fourth and fifth graders, Safe Haven Tutoring and Homework Assistance for students of all grades, and domestic enrichment programs in which senior citizens are afforded opportunities to exercise; and

WHEREAS, it is through the noble efforts of the Sallie Crenshaw Bethlehem Community Center that diamonds in the rough are polished, and made to shine, and for that this legislative body is most thankful, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That this body does hereby honor and express its deep appreciation to the Sallie Crenshaw Bethlehem Community Center for eighty years of meritorious service to the people of South Chattanooga.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.